

Indian Classical Religions

Hinduism

Background

Started in the wake of the Indo-European Aryan invaders. The cities of Harrapa and Mohenjo-Daro dissolved and passed into the historical record. The light skinned Aryans implemented a system that favored their position in the new emerging caste system, which is the corner stone of the Hindu religion.

Crash course world history you-tube video of the beginning of India's Hindu history

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7ndRwqJYDM>

Founder – biography

Hinduism has no single founder or central holy person

Sacred Texts

- ⇒ Vedas
- ⇒ Rig-Vedas
- ⇒ Bhagavad Gita
- ⇒ Upanishads – writings which formed the basic religious construct of Hinduism
- ⇒ Rayamana

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- ⇒ Believe in a divine force (aka universal soul, divine essence) informing the universe and every creature's soul is thought to be a part of the divine life force
- ⇒ Polytheistic with multiple manifestations of the One divine essence
 - Lord Brahma – The Creator



- Shiva the destroyer



- Vishnu the preserver



- Ganesh



- ⇒ Gods and Goddesses regulated natural forces and possessed human qualities
- ⇒ Goal is to achieve nirvana or oneness with the universal soul
- ⇒ People achieve nirvana through reincarnation through multiple life cycles
- ⇒ Karma is the moral force of a humans actions that determine if they enter a higher or lower caste in the next life
- ⇒ Four principle aims of human life:
 1. Dharma: obedience to religious and moral law
 2. Artha: pursuit of economic well-being and honest prosperity
 3. Kama: enjoyment of social, physical, and sexual pleasure
 4. Moksha: salvation of soul

Crash course world history you-Tube video about Ashoka and Buddhism:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Nn5uqE3C9w&feature=relmfu>

Impact on society

Hinduism and the Caste system form the social construct of India and provide the moral basis and ethical standard for behavior in India. It is the dominant characteristic of India's history

Spread/growth

Hinduism has never spread beyond the region of India. It did spread within the region of India as it was propagated by early Brahmin leaders and gurus taught the concepts of the divine essence and reincarnation.

Buddhism

Background

It emerged in the predominantly Hindu backdrop of India.

Founder – biography

- ⇒ Siddhartha Gautama – rich prince groomed to become a governor who when he observed the suffering of the lower castes decided to abandon his families wealth and live a life of meditation and personal discipline. He left his wife, family, and the comforts of wealth to become a holy man.
- ⇒ During his wandering Siddhartha spent 49 days sitting under a bodhi tree meditating and trying to understand suffering. He endured temptations from demons but eventually achieved “enlightenment” and earned the title “Buddha”

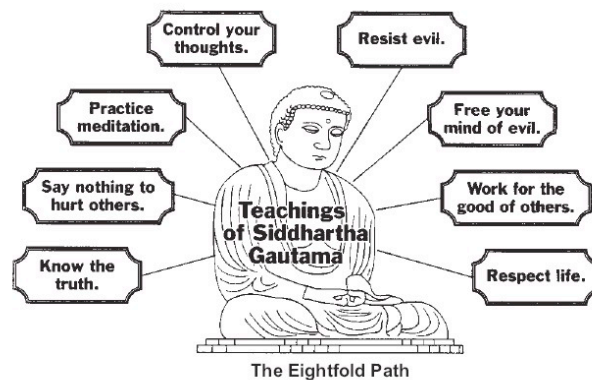
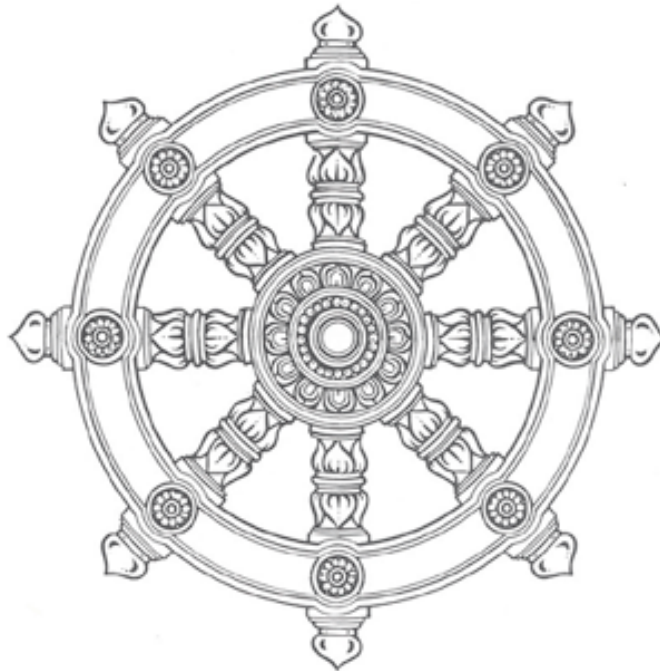


Sacred Texts

- Tripitaka
- Mahayana Sutras
- Tibetan Book of the Dead
- To read more: <http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/texts.htm>

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- ⇒ Main teachings: Four Noble Truths
 - First: life is full of suffering
 - Second: suffering is caused by desire
 - Third: The way to end suffering is to end desire
 - Fourth: The way to end desire is to follow the eight-fold path
- Eight-fold path: right belief, right resolve, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right contemplation, and right meditation



Source: *The Human Experience*, Glencoe

- ⇒ The goal is the achievement of nirvana, oneness with the universal soul
- ⇒ Buddhist reject the caste system
- ⇒ Buddhist believe you can achievement enlightenment breaking the cycle of reincarnation to arrive at nirvana in a single life cycle
- ⇒ Egalitarian nature of Buddhism along with the preaching of Buddhist monks and the zealous building of monasteries after the conversion of Ashoka led to significant growth of the religion
- ⇒ Over time Buddhism divided into several lines of thinking
 1. Theravada Buddhism was closely connected to the original example set by Siddhartha and was an extreme ascetic approach of self-denial and self-sacrifice
 2. Others began to view Buddha as a divine being who is to be the object of worship and devotion
 3. Bodhisattva – meaning “enlightened being” people who had reached enlightenment of the perfected state and who earned the reward of nirvana but intentionally delayed their entry to nirvana so that they could help others achieve enlightenment

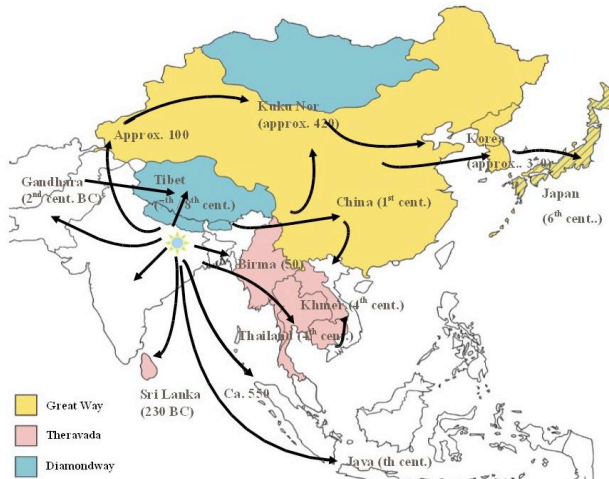
4. Mahayana Buddhism – version of Buddhism with simpler requirements based on acts of generosity and compassion

Impact on society

At first Buddhism because of its rejection of the caste, was persecuted by the Hindu religious leaders. Buddhism gained a big boost when the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka converted to Buddhism and made Buddhism legal within India.

Spread/growth

Buddhism took root and grew when it was made legal by Ashoka. Buddhism developed a system of monasteries for monks to go and meditate and seek enlightenment. Buddhism spread as monks following established trade routes began to seek out new places to establish monasteries. Buddhism spread throughout SE Asia and across the silk roads all the way to China, Korea and Japan.



China

Philosophy/Religion:

Crash Course History you-tube video on history of China

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIWORyToTo4&feature=related>

Legalism

Background

Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi was the most ardent proponent of this theory. Emperor Qin's reign was in fact short because of his desire for punishment and blood. He took legalism to an extreme.

Founder – biography

⇒ Shang yang was founder

Sacred Texts

⇒ Works known as “*The Book of Lord Shang*”

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- ⇒ Argued that the strength of the state is found in its agriculture and armed forces and that as many individuals as possible should farm or be in the military, which discouraged most other careers
- ⇒ Starts with a basic belief that human nature is “Evil” and that people can only be controlled by harsh enforcement of strict laws and that the state was the mechanism of enforcement

Impact on society

After Qin dynasty only a small remnant of true legalists remained with only minimal influence

Spread/growth

Beyond China, legalism is often associated with religious interpretation in which a person believes in strict adherence to the principles of their belief

Confucianism

Background

Born in the turmoil of the Era of Warring States, Chinese thinkers began to look for ways to explain the violence and to maintain order even in the midst of troubling times

Founder – biography

Kung Fuzi (Confucius)

Mencius - a disciple of Confucius - was a major contributor to the advancement of Confucian ideals during the Han dynasty

Sacred Texts

⇒ Confucius writings are found in a work known as the “Analects”

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- ⇒ Confucius did not address religious or spiritual questions
- ⇒ Confucius never discussed the concept of the right kind of government (as Plato did in Greece)
- ⇒ According to Confucius political and social harmony came from the proper ordering of human relationships rather than the establishment of a specific form of government
- ⇒ Moral integrity and a capacity to make wise and fair judgments are the trademark of a Confucian trained scholar
 - *Ren* – kindness, benevolence, sense of humanity (heart)
 - *Li* – custom of respect and courtesy among people
 - *Xiao* – filial piety or proper order of the relationship within the family
 - 5 basic relationships
 1. Ruler to ruled
 2. Husband to wife
 3. Father to eldest son
 4. Eldest Son to younger son
 5. Neighbor to neighbor

Confucianism’s overarching goal is to maintain an orderly society

Impact on society

After the Han Dynasty, Confucianism becomes the primary guiding principle of the Chinese Empire until the end of the dynastic tradition in 1912.

The bureaucracy will be continually filled with scholar-gentry that only earns their positions because of their mastery of Confucian teaching and principles.

Confucianism also impacts Chinese society by providing the core ethical system that guides all personal interactions. It focuses on proper manners and the appropriate interactions of people in the 5 basic relationships.

Confucianism also promotes political awareness

Spread/growth

Confucianism was adopted by Korea, Japan, Vietnam as the primary political system for their leaders as tribute empires to China. The experiment with Confucianism in Japan was short lived and not very successful

Outside of East Asia, Confucianism has had little impact.

Daoism/Taoism

Background

Daoism emerges at the same time as Confucianism. It is the spiritual counterpart to the philosophical dimension of Confucianism. Many consider Daoism and Confucianism to be the spiritual yin and yang of China. Daoism focuses on the spiritual realm while Confucianism focuses on the ethical realm.

Founder – biography

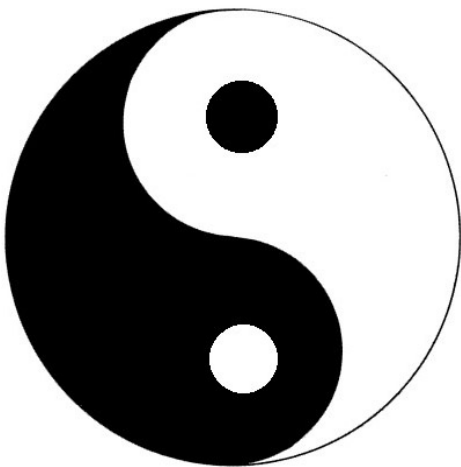
⇒ Founded by Laozi

Sacred Texts

⇒ Teaching contained in Daodejing (*Classic of the Way and of Virtue*)

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- ⇒ Unlike Confucianism, Daoism is the effort to understand the character of the universe
- ⇒ Dao means “The Way of nature” or “the way of the cosmos”
 - Dao is like water which is soft and yielding yet is also so powerful that it erodes even the hardest rock
 - Emphasis is on balance and harmony with nature
 - Yin- Yang strong and opposing forces resisting against each other until balance is achieved
 - Daoist devoted energies to reflection and introspection



Impact on society

While Daoists believed that Confucianism was a striving after things that couldn't be understood it was in reality a nice blending of spiritual essence with moral code of Confucianism

Spread/growth

Daoism is not found outside of China

There are no known specific texts that chronicle the gods and their interactions with man although Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were considered authentic accounts of the struggle between men and the gods.

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- Though the Greek city-states were fiercely independent entities they shared common cultural connections and religious ideals.
- The Greeks were Polytheistic with a vast array of gods
- Greek gods were ***anthropomorphic*** meaning that they had human characteristics. They were human looking in form, they were jealous, angry, fell in love, and had very human emotions. The Greek gods often interfered in the affairs of humans and on occasion those interactions were personal and sexual with the offspring having both human and supernatural characteristics
- The gods lived on Mt. Olympus and there were 12 major deities who determined the fate and fortunes of human beings.
 - *Zeus* was the supreme god who was associated with the heavens, lightening, and kingship.
 - *Poseidon* was the god of the sea
 - *Hades* was Lord of the underworld
 - *Hera* (Zeus's sister) was god of marriage
 - *Apollo* was the god of the sky, truth, and healing
 - *Aphrodite* was the goddess of love and beauty
 - *Athena* goddess of wisdom and war
 - *Artemis* god of the moon and the hunt
 - *Hestia* was the god of hearth and home
 - *Hephaestus* god of fire and forge
 - *Ares* god of war
 - *Hermes* – messenger and divine herald

Creation stories explaining how the gods emerged out of Chaos

Many cults devoted to specific gods provided avenues of worship of varying forms some of which were devoted only to women such as the worship of the goddess ***Demeter*** and the most famous was the cult of ***Dionysus*** where the women danced, sang, got drunk and ripped open a sacrificial animal

Impact on society

While typical Greek citizens paid homage to the Gods, Greek polytheism was not very satisfying to the average citizen. The gods were unpredictable and there was no specific set of standards or ethics that were associated with the worship of the gods.

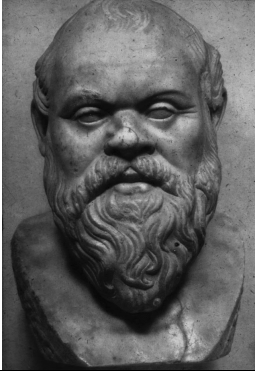
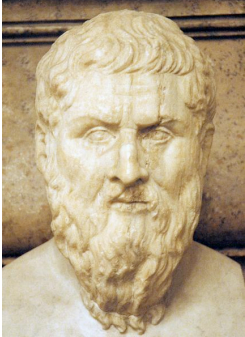
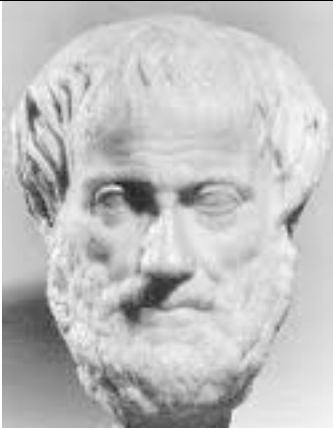
Spread/growth

Greek polytheism was completely adopted by the Roman Empire who simply renamed the Greek gods with Latin names. After the fall of the Roman Empire, however, the concept of the Greco-Roman pantheon died out in practice and in theory.

Unlike the other great classical civilizations Greco-Roman polytheism had no lasting effect.

The Philosophers

The philosophical developments of the Greeks became the foundation of thinking in the western world. Reaching all the way to the founding of the United States the Greek philosophical foundation of observation, rational inquiry, and questioning form the basis of developments in the western world.

Socrates <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Socrates is worried about the present life and how to live it best➤ “The unexamined life is not worth living”➤ Search for truth and the meaning of truth➤ Question everything	
Plato <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Perfect form➤ Allegory of the Cave➤ Most famous work – The Republic – discussed the perfect form of government	
Aristotle – <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Tutored Alexander The Great➤ The first to distinguish between subject matters and invented the concept of “disciplines” to be studied.➤ Formalized the rules of logic➤ Developed the idea of deductive reasoning➤ Provable conclusions <p>Can’t know an item until we know what it was designed to achieve</p>	

Roman Religion

Greek Gods – redefined

- Roman polytheism was a copy of all things Greek with most of the deities simply being renamed.
- Again like the Greeks, Roman deities were ***anthropomorphic*** gods possessing human characteristics and who got involved in the affairs of humans as a way to test the character and courage of those humans.

Like the Greeks 12 main Gods ruled from Mt. Olympus

Greek God	Roman Name	God of
Zeus	<i>Jupiter:</i>	King of the Gods
Hera	Juno	Queen of the Gods
Poseidon	Neptune	The Sea
Hades	Pluto	The Underworld
Hestia	Vesta	Hearth and home
Athena	Minerva	Wisdom and War
Artemis	Diana	Moon and hunt
Apollo	Apollo	Light, music, and prophecy
Aphrodite	Venus	Love and beauty
Hephaestus	Vulcan	Fire and forage
Ares	Mars	War
Hermes	Mercury	Messenger and Divine Herald

Temples dedicated to the gods were built throughout the Roman Empire for worship, rituals, ceremony, and sacrifice

Christianity

Background

During the reign of Augustus in a remote province of Judea on about the 3BCE another of the world's great classical religions came into being when an itinerant preacher was born to a common Jewish carpenter – Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus grew up in Judea and around the age of 30 he went into the wilderness to fast and pray. During the fasting in the desert he overcame being tempted by the devil. He emerged from the wilderness and began to preach a message about the kingdom of god calling people to repentance and salvation based on a message of love. According to the gospel accounts Jesus ministry was filled with miraculous occurrences, compassion for the outcasts, and strong condemnation for the established religious organization. His preaching angered the established Jewish religious leaders and Roman officials thought that his action and claims were seditious. In about 30 CE he was trialed by a Roman court and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

Crash course world history you-tube video on the development of Christianity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG55ErfdaeY>

Founder-biography

Jesus of Nazareth called the Christ (Christ means “anointed one”)

Other notable personalities: the twelve disciples, the Apostle Paul

Sacred Texts

Bible

- Consists of two parts.
- First is the Old Testament, which chronicles the history of the ancient Jews and their covenant with a single God.
- Second is the New testament, which contains the four gospels detailing the life and ministry of Jesus as well as a multitude of letters written by Paul and other disciples to the churches in Asia Minor

Core beliefs/basic doctrines

- Jesus as the Son of God entered the human experience through the immaculate conception and the virgin birth
- Trinity: God the Father, Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit each composing a unique part of the God head with Jesus being the human incarnation of the one true God.
- Jesus message was of love and forgiveness with a focus on everlasting life for those who believe.
- Jesus as the Son of God was crucified to pay the penalty for the sin of humankind
- Jesus is believed to have been resurrected from the dead giving him supremacy over life and death
- Salvation for the believer is gained through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection

Impact on Society

- His disciples and followers believed that Jesus had resurrected from the dead and they continued to proclaim the message that Christ had preached – they became known as Christians
- Initially the religion was persecuted and many attempts were made by Roman leaders to crush the followers and stamp out its influence but early church leaders such as the apostle Paul continued to go from city to city telling people about Christ and the religion continued to grow
- Eventually Christianity would be embraced by the Emperor Constantine and be made the official religion of Rome
- Christianity is commonly accepted as one of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. The message of love and forgiveness, the call for equality among all people was a shift from the highly militaristic and self-indulgent final centuries of the Empire. The message of Christ provided spiritual comfort and hope for people at just the time when the established polytheistic religion had widely been discounted.

Spread/growth

Like Buddhism, Christianity was spread readily along the established trade routes of the Roman Empire. The Roman road system made travel from location to location very easy. Preachers such as Paul and the twelve disciples went from city to city and met in local Jewish synagogues and city centers preaching about Jesus and gaining a following. Christianity would eventually rise to be the cornerstone religion of Western Civilization and spread through most of the known world.

Three main branches:

1. Roman Catholicism
2. Eastern (Greek) Orthodox
3. Protestants
 - 1) Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentcostals

Persia

Crash Course History you-tube video on the Persians and the Greeks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-mkVSasZIM&feature=relmfu>

Zoroastrianism

Background

This monotheistic religion was a product of ancient Persian civilization. Many scholars think it possible that the early Hebrews got their ideas of monotheism from Zoroastrianism, though no direct link has been established. Followers were called Parsis which meant “Persian.” Many were forced from Persian with the arrival of the Muslims in the 7th and 8th centuries and traveled to the Bombay area of India where a small community of Parsis still live.

Founder

Zarathustra is believed to have lived around 600 BCE though many think he may have lived as early as 1500BCE.

Core Beliefs

- The world was originally perfect but became a cosmic battleground between the forces of good and evil. People have to choose to live a good or evil life. Those who choose good, simple lives will go to heaven and be united with God, but those who choose evil will go to hell.
- Zoroaster predicted that one day the earth would be restored to perfection again.
- Purity is of great importance and any form of decay should be avoided.

- Death with its bodily decay is seen as the temporary victory of evil.
- Death rituals include “towers of silence” where the dead are placed on towers so that the flesh can be consumed by birds, because the earth should not be contaminated with decaying flesh and cremation is not possible since fire is sacred.

(Note: information on Zoroastrianism was taken exclusively from The Usborne Book of World Religions)